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ABSTRACT

The Learn in Beauty Project at Northern Arizona University worked with a consortium of seven Navajo Nation school districts seeking to implement the Dine Language and Culture teaching perspective. This perspective is based on the premises that education is best when it reflects a sense of place; education should be based on the philosophy and values of those being educated; and preparation of teachers/mentors should reflect the Dine perspective of education. The project assisted teachers who were enrolled tribal members in completing a bilingual Navajo endorsement and an M.Ed. and provided continued support to the teachers as they juggled jobs, families, and studies. The goals of the project were to: support school reform by strengthening a network of schools on the Navajo Nation that provide exemplary community-based programs for limited-English-proficient students; implement a standards-based curriculum that reflected the Dine philosophy of education; and support beginning bilingual teachers. Mentors had a master's degree in bilingual education or curriculum and instruction and at least 3 years of bilingual classroom experience. Courses were provided at six reservation sites via onsite instruction, online courses, and interactive television. During the 5 years of the project, 100 Navajo students completed a master's degree in bilingual multicultural education. The project also served as a model of long-term collaboration between a college, a tribal education department, public schools, and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to serve language minority students in rural settings. Comments of program graduates are included. (TD)

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Learn in Beauty: A Professional Development Project for Navajo Bilingual Teachers

A Paper Presented at the annual conference of the National Association of Bilingual Education, New Orleans, LA February 1, 2003

Louise Lockard, Jennie de Groat, Clara Bedonie

The Learn in Beauty Project at Northern Arizona University worked for five years from 1998-2003 with a consortium of seven Navajo Nation school districts: the Kayenta Unified School District, the Ganado Unified School District The Chinle Unified School District, the Window Rock Unified School District, Rock Point Community School, the Tuba City Unified School District and Little Singer Community School. Each school district was identified as seeking to implement the Diné Language and Culture teaching perspective: a perspective based on the premises that 1) education is best when it reflects a sense of place 2) education should be based on the philosophy and values of those being educated, and 3) preparation of teachers/mentors should reflect the Diné perspective of education. At each of these seven sites there is a reciprocal relationship between the schools and the community involving the community in the identification of issues to be explored in the teaching process and involving students in oral history research. In the five years of the project, 100 Navajo students completed a Master's degree in Bilingual Multicultural Education at Northern Arizona University.

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The Learn in Beauty Project was funded by a Title VII Teacher and Personnel Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Project Director, the Project Manager and the mentor teachers worked with the Diné Scholarship Office to identify qualified applicants who were enrolled tribal members and to assist applicants with the application and admissions process. Mentor teachers also assisted prospective students with the process.

In 2001 Northern Arizona University ranked first in the nation in degrees awarded to Native Americans with 253 degrees. From 1993-1997, as a member of a consortium of five institutions of teacher education sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Northern Arizona University offered courses leading to an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education to bilingual paraprofessionals in Kayenta, Chinle and Tuba City. When funding for this consortium was phased out, Northern Arizona University continued to offer undergraduate courses to these cohorts of paraprofessionals. Since 1995, Northern Arizona University has graduated 249 Native Americans with a Bachelors degree in Elementary Education. Many of these recent graduates of NAU were not fully endorsed in ESL or bilingual education. Completion of the M. Ed. in Bilingual Multicultural Education in conjunction with mentoring from experienced bilingual teachers filled this gap between the requirements of the Ford Foundation graduates and the requirements for an Arizona Bilingual or ESL Endorsement.

There is continuing need for teachers holding a Navajo bilingual or ESL endorsement in each of the consortium districts. Window Rock Assistant Superintendent Gloria Hale-Showalter writes, "There are so many diverse needs to address that it is difficult to keep up, especially with a certified staff turnover that averages over 20%.

Over the past two decades, using whatever funds were available we have been able to assist over 25 Navajo teacher aides in obtaining their college degrees and becoming classroom teachers. We have several others presently attempting to complete their degrees, but we have been able to provide very limited assistance and they have to juggle jobs, families and studies. The Learn in Beauty Project assisted teachers in completing coursework for a Bilingual Navajo endorsement and a M.Ed. and in providing continued support as they juggle jobs, families and studies."

In "School Principals and Teachers sharing American Indian and Alaska Native Students" Pavel (1999) writes "A considerable number of American Indian and Alaska Native students can be found concentrated in a relatively small number of publicly funded schools." He continues "There was and still remains a shortage of Native American people who can serve as positive role models in administrative and teaching positions."

This project has empowered teachers to make instructional choices that honor their professionalism and their language background. Knowledge learned in one language paves the way for knowledge acquisition in a second language. Cummins writes, "In social situations where there is likely to be serious erosion of the first (minority) language there is a need for the development and maintenance of the language if intellectual performance is not to suffer." (Cummins, 1996) Early literacy in a child's home language supports literacy development in English and academic achievement in all content areas (Leslow-Hurley, 1990, Hudelson, 1987). Writing systems have been developed for Navajo and for the majority of indigenous languages (Burnaby 1985, 1996).

The Learn in Beauty Project worked with the Division of Diné Education to implement the Diné Culture and Language Curriculum Framework (Division of Diné Education,1996) and the Diné Language Standards (Division of Diné Education, 2001) and with the participating districts to provide quality education for LEP students in accord with school wide plans. Navajo language curriculum extended through experiential learning in a community setting in which the values of "place" and culture were reinforced. (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001)

The goals and objectives of the project were to:

1. To support school reform by strengthening an existing network of schools on the Navajo Nation which provide exemplary community based programs for LEP students.

1.1. Bilingual Fellows, mentor teachers and non-project teachers from consortium schools will participate in the Learn in Beauty Summer Institute.

1.2 Cohorts of Bilingual Fellows will include participants from each consortium site.

1.3 Exemplary practice will be identified and disseminated on the project web page

2. To implement a curriculum aligned with state and national content area standards which reflect the Diné philosophy of education.

2.1. Bilingual Fellows and mentor teachers will participate in developing Navajo language and culture curriculum.

2.2. Community values and issues will be integrated into thematic units.

2.3. The Diné Learning Framework will serve as the foundation for curriculum development.

3. To support new bilingual teachers in their first years of teaching.

3.1. New bilingual teachers will work with a mentor teacher onsite.

3.2. The rate of teacher turnover will decline in each consortium site.

3.3. New bilingual teachers will demonstrate superior classroom performance

3.4. The number of certified Navajo bilingual teachers will increase in each consortium district.

3.5. The number of bilingual teachers holding a M.Ed. will increase in each consortium district.

3.6. Bilingual teachers will increase participation in professional organizations.

These goals and objectives led to an increased capacity of the consortium sites to provide a quality education to ELLs and to provide continual support to new bilingual and ESL teachers. The capacity of Northern Arizona University to provide graduate and undergraduate teacher education programs onsite in rural communities was strengthened during the five years of the project. This project also served as a model of long-term collaboration between a college, a tribal education department, public, and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to serve language minority students in rural settings.

The students were selected on the basis of: academic excellence with a GPA of 3.0 in undergraduate work. They were required to be in their initial years of teaching, and they were required to demonstrate proficiency in the Navajo language as demonstrated by Navajo tribal language certification, and to demonstrate proficiency in the English language as demonstrated by the language arts component of the Arizona Teacher Proficiency Exam. Students demonstrated excellence in classroom performance based on the district observation measure, and commitment to professionalism based on participation in community and professional organizations.

The 14 Mentors were selected on the basis of academic excellence with the

completion of a M.Ed. in Bilingual Education or Curriculum and Instruction with a GPA of at least 3.0, and with at least 3 years of classroom experience in a bilingual setting. The mentors hold Navajo tribal language certification. The mentors demonstrated excellence in English communications skills through oral presentations, publications, and community service, and excellence in classroom performance documented on the current district observation measure. They also demonstrated commitment to professionalism based on participation in community and professional organizations.

The Project website at http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~ll3/beauty/ provides information about participating school districts, e-mail addresses of mentor teachers and students, and sample lesson plans.

A sample course schedule for the Spring 2003 semester includes onsite courses, online courses and Interactive Instructional Television courses available at six Reservation sites:

BME 530 Foundations of Bilingual ESL deGroat Web

BME 420 Literacy Biliteracy deGroat Web

BME 538 Linguistics in Ed. Contexts Popko Web

BME 631 English Instruction in Bilingual Contexts McAllister Chinle weekends

BME 698 Graduate Seminar Lockard IITV Chinle ,Ganado ,Kayenta, Keams Canyon, Ft.Defiance, Tuba City

EDR 610 Introduction to Research Gorman-Keith Tuba City March weekends, Chinle April weekends

The annual assessment survey provided information about the effectiveness of the project. In response to the question, "Describe any ways that you will incorporate the

Navajo language and culture into your classroom differently as a result of your participation in the Learn in Beauty Project" a student responded, "I do not hesitate to use the Navajo language especially during instruction. I know that a majority of the students hear Navajo spoken in their homes". Another student responded, "Being part of Learn in Beauty, I have been able to incorporate culturally relevant lessons using technology. My students really enjoy getting the best of both worlds."

Opal Dixon, Kimberly Tso and Ruth Norvill, Chinle Master's Fellows participated in the Navajo Studies Conference at Northern Arizona University in October 2002 with a demonstration of three oral history projects developed in BME 637: The Cultural Component of Bilingual Multicultural Education. The session was titled "It may be covered by the sand dunes where it once stood: An Oral History of the Chinle Community"

The teachers discussed how their attitudes as language learners were shaped by their early schooling experiences and how they have transformed these experiences to revitalize the teaching of Navajo language and culture within their school.

Ruth Norvill, a third grade teacher in the dual language project at Chinle Primary School and a 2002 graduate of the Learn in Beauty Project presented "An Oral History of Chinle Valley Store" Norvill wrote, "The Chinle Valley Store was an important institution in the community from the early 1900s until the 1970s. Community members share their memories of the economic and social importance of this institution." Norvill used the oral history interviews to develop a Trading Posts thematic unit for her dual language classroom.

Opal Dixon, a 2000 graduate of the Learn in Beauty Project, presented "An Oral History of the Chinle Boarding School" She wrote, "The Chinle Boarding School which opened in 1910 was also an important institution which changed over the years due to changes in Federal educational policy and due to the shifting sands of the community. The school building was declared unsafe and relocated during World War II and again in the 1980s. Today Chinle Boarding School is located in Many Farms and the enrollment continues to increase." Interviews with former students and teachers also provided resources for a thematic unit for the third grade students at Chinle Primary School.

Kimberly Tso, a third grade teacher at Chinle Primary School and a 2000 graduate of the Learn in Beauty Project presented a paper titled, "Relearning My Cultural Identity: A Life History of my Paternal Grandfather Clitso Dedman" She wrote, "I remember my father telling me stories of his paternal grandfather, Clitso Dedman, who lived his life as a trader, woodcarver and blacksmith in the early 1900s.Clitso Dedman was born in 1879 in the Chinle area of Northern Arizona. He was educated in Grand Junction, Colorado as a blacksmith, stonemason and carpenter. He returned to the Reservation where he helped build the Annunciation Mission Church in Chinle. In 1909 he took over the Nazlini Trading Post where he issued his own trade money and where he became the owner of a black Model T Ford. My father, Kenneth C. Dedman Sr., remembers taking a ride with him. "We would take turns winding that thing up. I think it was the only car around in the area during that time." Dedman built the route from Nazlini to Ganado for the community. In 1913 he drove President Theodore Roosevelt across the Reservation in his model T.

Clitso Dedman left Nazlini around 1920 and moved to Chinle where he worked for Cozy McSparron to expand what is today the Thunderbird Lodge. He built a two story home. His grandson Kenneth stated, 'The two-story is no longer there, it may be covered by the sand dunes where it once stood.'

Learning about my ancestors was worthwhile since my paternal grandfathers are the Tsinaajinis (Black Streak Wood People). My great grandfather granted me this clan. It makes me proud and thankful to know that I had a grandfather who was dedicated to his work. He was a trader, blacksmith and interpreter and was known for his authentic art pieces across the nation. I consider how important it is to be a lifelong learner and to keep the Diné tradition alive just as he once did."

Rosey Jones and Clara Bedonie were invited to participate in the 2002 NABE Conference in Philadelphia on March 21st. Their presentation was titled: "Preserving Navajo Language Through Literature". Ms. Jones and Ms. Bedonie described their work with post-secondary students to create Navajo language children's picture books for students at Tuba City Primary School. These texts are used to promote Navajo language and literacy. Text extensions include the use of puppetry, flannel board storytelling, role-playing, thematic units and interactive reading. The presenters shared a video tape of a Navajo language puppet show prepared by students in Navajo 101 at Diné College and discussed how these learning strategies are integrated though the Diné Educational Philosophy.

Gloria Chee and Etta Shirley were also invited to participate at the NABE Conference on March 23rd with a Demonstration titled "Learning Continues on Every Day Throughout Your Life: An Integrated Thematic Unit on Navajo Weaving" Ms.Chee

and Ms. Shirley demonstrated a thematic unit which they developed based on the children's story "The Goat in the Rug" by Martin Link. They discussed how parents and children explore mathematical concepts of measurement, estimation, and geometry as they participate in the process of shearing the sheep, dying the wool, and preparing the rug for sale.

Marilyn Begay, a Navajo Immersion teacher in grades 6-8 and a May 2003 graduate of the project writes, "Having gone through the traditional way of teaching myself, I had initially thought that is how I was teaching my classes. For example, I teach Navajo language and I was using the translation method. Then, due to these Bilingual Education classes, I changed my teaching methods.Also readings and the research about other language programs help me immensely in understanding how to teach two languages. I appreciate the Learn in Beauty Project for offering a new dimension for those of us who teach students with a heritage language. I feel much stronger in promoting the significant values of Indian students."

The Learn in Beauty project documents the willingness of the Learn in Beauty Consortium sites to nominate Master's fellows and to share ongoing curriculum, and to support bilingual teachers as they obtain graduate degrees. Esther Peaches, a June 2002 graduate described her transformation as a teacher, "I have changed my teaching style 180 degrees, my students have thrived both socially and academically. Due to my shift in teaching strategies and the messages that I have communicated to my students regarding their identities, I was able to empower my students to "go for it" without feeling shameful about their cultural background. My students have learned being bilingual and bicultural is a very powerful tool and they having the power to make changes in their lives and their

environment both at school and outside the school." Another participant wrote, "I appreciate the Learn in Beauty Project for offering a new dimension for those of us who teach students with a heritage language. I feel much stronger in promoting the significant values of Indian students. This type of study brings us much closer to our family and home and at the same time gives us an opportunity to further our education. Learn in Beauty makes what has been impossible very much possible."

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